

# Beyond

CHALLENGING SOFTWARE

COMMODORE 64 version

## the MIDNIGHT



NOW for the  
**COMMODORE 64**

By Mike Singleton  
conversion by TAG & The KID  
(INCENTIVE)



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## Using this booklet

Welcome to the World's first-ever Epic game, *The Lords of Midnight*.

It more closely resembles a fantasy film than a computer game but the main difference is that you are in control of the main characters and whether you lead them to victory or defeat, the story is written around your experts. The game sets the scene, controls the forces of evil and independent characters which move in and out of the plot and change the landscape of Midnight and its people in every move before seen in any computer game.

Author Mike Singleton has produced a game which can be played as a grand, a mighty wargame, or merely as a walk through the spectacular scenery of Midnight.

Take this journey for yourself: load up the game (instructions on page 20). While it is loading, read Mike's own introduction to the game (opposite). Try moving through the scenery using the compass keys to look around and the Move key to go forward in the direction you are 'facing'.

You will find you own four characters, Lusor, Morten, Cortith and Florthorn including these keys will enable you to switch between them. Try and discover where your characters are in on the map.

By now you will hopefully realise that *The Lords of Midnight* is something special and will be tempted to read the *Chronicles of Midnight* to discover you make the most of the experience which awaits you.

A full guide to play begins on page 20.

There will be two more Epic games making up the *Midnight* trilogy coming soon from Mike Doomedark's Revenge details: Lusor's quest to rescue the captured Morten in the lands beyond the icy wastes. And *The Eye of the Moon* is the story of Morten's search for the magical jewel which can look into the future. It takes place in the lands south of Midnight.

Commodore 64 conversion by Tag & The Nut (Incentive Software)

# the LORDS of MIDNIGHT

## AN INTRODUCTION

The Lords of Midnights not simply an adventure game nor simply a war game. It is really a new type that we have chosen to call an epic game. For as you play the Lords of Midnights you will be writing a new chapter in the history of the peoples of the Free.

You will guide individual characters across the land of Midnights vital quests but you will also command armies that must endeavour to hold back the foul hordes of Doomedark, the Witchking. Nor will your task be easy for your computer is programmed to play the role of the Witchking and provide a guiding intelligence for the forces of evil ranged against you. Yours will be no inevitable victory.

Above all, at every stage of the game, you will only see the land of Midnights through the eyes of the characters and commandments you control. You will use no map plotting with untiring, surveying your own and the enemy's dispositions. Instead, as you switch your attention to each of the characters you control, you will see only what they would see from the spot where they stand in perspective view drawn in full perspective. Looking into the distance, you will see the mountains and forests and hills of the lands of Midnights, you will sometimes camped on the plains, great cities rising in the distance, the forlorn ruins of long forgotten fortresses. And if you wish to see what lies beyond that mountain range, beyond that dark forest, you must move forward and look for yourself!

We have called this unique feature "Inkeepage", for it gives you the power to journey through the landscape of Midnights in the very same way as thy traveller or captain see, as you move forward and your path twists and turns, the landscape changes, just as it would if you were really walking through Midnights. To achieve this effect, the Lords of Midnights program can create no less than 32,000 different perspectived views!

On the following pages, you will find the prelude to the epic game, the first passage of the chapter you must write in the long book of Midnights. The story sets the scene for the events that will unfold in the game. It contains no vital clues to the defeat of Doomedark but serves to remind you of the dangerous nature of your task and of the price of failure. We recommend you read it, before embarking on your quest for victory. Partnership you will find our "Guide to Play" that is vital reading.

Good luck go with you on your quest and fare thee well!

Mike Singleton



# LUXOR AND MORKIN

Luxor stood at the door of the hut, gazing into the white gloom of the forest. A thin scatter of mist that the powder-glow of the new moon was floating down onto the frozen ground. It was time, thought Luxor, it was time. Anickle of fear touched him and shivered through him. He drew his cloak tightly around himself as though it would warm the chill in his heart, and turned from the forest.

You are troubled, my Lord – said Morkin. The boy looked up at Luxor; he faced mirror of the man's sadness.

The world is troubled, " said the Forest Keeper. He threw another log onto the fire amidst a flock of sparks flying into the smoky darkness of his hut.

Come and warmth yourself by the fire, my Lord," said the boy. He stood up and offered the stool he was occupied on.

No, Morkin we must go. The Solstice is nearly upon us and Doomsday is already walking from his chamber. We must reach the Tower of the Moon by tomorrow yet our mile-journey is to be long and hazardous.

The horses, my Lord?

Yes, fetch them and let's be on our journey.

The boy scurried out. Luxor turned to the Forest Keeper.

Your fire and shelter have been a precious gift, Keeper. I thank you.

If you and your young lady can keep Doomsday a year from my trees, you're more than welcome," growled the Keeper. Then, grudgingly he added, "My Lord, and spade to the fire.

Luxor turned and strode out of the hut into the deep forest. Morkin was already mounted his waiting Luxor swung himself up onto the saddle of his wise war-stallion. Then, at a word from the horses, they rode off into the trees. Both were silent and in an hour there was no trace of their passing.

For nine hours they rode in silence. Luxor lost in his thoughts, the boy watching the forest in amazement of fear and fascination. He had heard the balemen talk and couldn't quite believe they were only tales. No, the forest had its own very lovely beauty; its trees standing still as stone-blocked flowing arteries, power from the earth that could thrust them as tall as towers, towards the sky. Morkin half smaller than he had ever felt.

As darkness passed, the boy grew tired of the forest and turned to speak to his Lord. Luxor was gazing into the distance as though in a dream.

Why does the Solstice trouble you, my Lord?" asked the boy.

Luxor turned his head slowly towards Morkin. For a few moments he said nothing and then, as thoughts had suddenly remastered, he began to speak.

The world was always white, Morkin. You've heard the legends of Summer? When the land was green and blooming with life. Ten thousand years ago it was so long that men barely believed such a time ever existed. Yet the Wise remember. They have scrolls that tell of the first snows falling and the first carpets of snowcovering the land. Suddenly all the lands of MidNight were plunged into the winter of ours. Then came famine, a great famine that raged our people, and with famine came war.

But the Solstice, my Lord – insisted the boy.

I am coming to it, Morkin, I am coming to it. The Wise shut themselves up in their towers and let war take its course. They did not forebore MidNight, yet they knew that war was the only way. For the lands that had learned with people in the long reigns of Summer could not feed such a strong and longer. Only one of the Wise, Gryphon the Gauntlet, stayed with his land and gave her machine-like combativeness war and conquest. Gryphon was astute, his advice well measured, and soon the Lord he served was powerful throughout the lands of MidNight, no longer a mere Lord but, my conquest, a King.

Was that Doomsday, then? asked the boy.

No, the King was not Doomsday. Lord Jaggarak reigned for but twelve moons before Gryphon had him murdered and took the crown for himself. The people and the lands were not

disposed, for they knew Gryfhalen had advised wisely and they knew nothing of his name. They told each other that Gryfhalen the Wise would see them through. So he did after a fashion, but he had not through wisdom but through fear and slaughter and cruelty. As the years passed, an icy chill spread through the hearts of those not already enslaved to him. No longer did people call him Gryfhalen the Wise but instead Doomedark, Witchking of Midlight. Even that was his crowning, for it pleased him to have so many trembled in fear of him.

“So Doomedark is one of the Wise!” said Morien in surprise.

“Who else but they could wield such power?” asked Luxor.

“You could, my Lord,” the boy replied, flatly.

Luxor smiled.

“Your heart speaks louder than your head, Morien. I would not seek such power; even if I could wield it.”

“But, my Lord, what of the Solstice? Why is the Solstice so important?”

“The Solstice, Morien, is the deepest, darkest day of winter. The Witchking, by his sorcery, draws his power from the very winter itself; he sucks from its heart, the cold that fills his own and burns its strength to his own will. For many reasons now Midlight has known a hard winter while Doomedark waits and prepares for the Solstice. Doomedark's last full assault on the Free was months before you were born, Morien, and even then we barely held him at bay. When the Solstice comes, and winter is deepest, Doomedark will draw more power than he has ever known from icy heart. Then he will unleash all the hellhounds of Midlight against us and I fear we may not withstand him.”

A shudder took passed across Morien's bright face.

“How so, my Lord? We are the Free and you are the mightiest warrior in all of Midlight!” the boy exclaimed.

Luxor smiled briefly.

“Morien, you do not明白 the justice, but even I would say it will take more than swords and strong arms to defeat the Witchking. In the last war he made against us I saw more upon score of his foul creatures yet always they were meant to take their place. But worst was the ice fear; the cold blast of terror he sent creeping over the land to stab men's hearts and turn their blood to water. This time it will be as cold as the Frozen Waste.”

“Even they cannot cross, so the legends say.”

“Perhaps, Morien, perhaps.”

Morien was silent for a moment, as though lost in thought. Then, as gravely as one of the Wise, he said: “We have, my Lord.”

“How so?” said Luxor.

The boy grinned, mischievously.

“The time you've gotten to help you.”

Luxor looked at the youngster, smiled and then roared with laughter; not at Morien's ludicrous reasoning but at the earnestness of his innocent, affectionate concern. Morien suddenly realised how foolish he would sound and burst into laughter too.

“Morien,” said the Lord Luxor still laughing, “I doubt the ice fear could even touch you. There's not a chink it could pass.”

“It couldn't catch me anyway!” said Morien, suddenly galloping ahead.

Luxor shook his head in disbelief and galloped after his runaway servant.



# THE SKULKRIN

As the darkness seeped through the trees, the skulkrin shivered and grunted. Still clinging to a nest of leaves and branches, he cowered as he lay there and his tiny hands quivered in supplication.

"O Great One," he whimpered, "Fawkrin would not fail you. Fawkrin is your faithful servant."

The skulkrin's long tongue loll'd out to lick an absent hand. A cold, crackling voice coming out of the creature's dream.

"What? I would not trust you further than I could kick you!"

As if to demonstrate, Doocanderik leered the toe of his boot at the skulkrin's thin belly. Fawkrin half-expecting such a response, darted away but not swiftly enough. The blow caught him on the backside and sent him sprawling. Doocanderik sneered.

"Fool."

The skulkrin picked himself up and dusted the splinters of ice from his ragged tunic.

"You're too kind to Fawkrin. Great One! Fawkrin loves to be kicked around. Oh surely Fawkrin loves a son's backside, oh surely too kind!" said the skulkrin, adding under his breath, "Great master of Nature once."

In a whistling voice, Doocanderik whispered, "Go."

Fawkrin inhaled the Whistling's frozen breath rolled towards him, through a glistening cloud of ice and snow clawed through the air. Fawkrin shivered. Shook and woke.

"Must find master," he muttered to himself. "Surely must."

Shaking himself as he stood, the skulkrin poked at all his bodily parts to make sure they were still there. Then scuttled off into the muck of the forest.

Fawkrin moved swiftly skipping over the crisp snow where the ground was uneven, dropping to all fours when fallen trees and rocky boulders made a mountain range of the forest floor. For a few moments, he imagined he was a young skulkrin again, dancing alone and carefree through the white wilderness, but presently he remembered, stopped and sniffed. The shimmering breath of the trees shimmered into the freezing sunlight but the air off their warmth mingled with the mousie glow of the forest, was no match. The skulkrin shivered and sniffed again. There was another warmth there too – boy warmth! His long tongue loll'd out over his lips. A bit to soon would not go amiss.

Fawkrin found his quarry in a clearing. There was no fire, nobody would have found them sooner. And the man and the boy were huddled under a makeshift roof of branches and ferns. Quiet as a snowflake, Fawkrin crept into the bower. He pawed around in the tunic and from the grubby depths he fugged out a small pouch of mutton fat. From it, the skulkrin pounced a lump of glowing white dust into his palm which he quickly snatched over the sleeping faces of the humans. Even so, Fawkrin felt a frosty numbness gripping his fingers like a glove of ice.

"He muttered to himself." Robbin' Doocanderik's magic. Could make magic that don't hurt. Fawkrin surely could. "Then he shook his raised little hand until the blood trickled back, whimpering softly at the white."

It seemed that stars had fallen from the sky to settle on the brows of the man and the boy. One by one, each glowing speck faded and disappeared as the sleep frost melted into thin skin. Fawkrin waited until the last glimmer had died, then edged closer to the man. He sniffed in the man's typical breath, his nose wrinkling and twitching as it tested its warmth and texture. Then he giggled in delight.

"Khee! Khee! Khee! The green Lord Luxor! Khee! Khee! Now He won't look Fawkrin on his backside, surely not."

The skulkrin knelt down, brought his mouth closer to Luxor's ear and in a hollow, soothling voice that seemed absurd from such a creature, he whispered, "Lord Luxor, green Lord Luxor, true Lord Luxor, why have you come to the Forest of Shadows? tell me. Oh tell me where you are bound?"

Luxor stirred. Eyes still closed, his arm rose mechanically and his hand moved toward my left ear in farewell. The skulkrin scurried away with a squeak of terror but Luxor's arm fell back.

inches, to the ground. Fiwaknum croached in the darkness a full minute before he found courage enough to crawl back to Lusor. In truth, even the wryly the courage of necessity, his fear of Doomedark recrossing itself over the floor of the warlord.

"Great Lord Lusor!" sang the skull-knife. "Tell me where you are bound?"

The time, Lusor did not stir. He spoke in a faint, weary manner:

"I have been called by the Wise." he sturred. "I have been called to the Council at the Tower of the Moon, summonsed."

"But why tell me why?" crooned the skull-knife.

"The Scribe Doomedark grows stronger yet. We must act. Knowing more. The Wise keep their own counsel."

Fiwaknum guessed this was the truth. Though a great warlord of the Free, even Lusor would not be privy to the secrets of the Wise.

"Bast! Great warlump. Might as well tell Doomedark the sun will rise tomorrow. Sons backside for Fiwaknum!"

The laught struck the skull-knife the ground, jagged, twinkling glass.

"Great lord! how do you think of the Witchking? Is he not greater than you?" hissed the skull-knife.

"Doomdark is hog spawn, a foul pestilence, a pest of scum adult; on the fair waters of Midnight. If he fought like a man, I would slay him in two breaths."

The skull-knife crouched in tremendous giggles. Though he shivered at the thought of him, there was nothing more deliciously mirthful than to hear him snigger. Suddenly a cold breath trickled down Fiwaknum's neck. His laughter stopped just as suddenly and he clasped his hands together:

"I wasn't laughing. O Great One, oh not. Surely I wasn't."

Only silence and the gentle whisper of the trees was the reply. The skull-knife sighed and smiled crookedly.

"Silly skull-knife. Can't hurt you! can't can He?"

He snuffled round and turned to the Hesping boy. He snuffled at her face and shoulders and chest.

"Myrrin! Fresh! And so warm!" he declared.

Morkin was lunging his nose towards the skull-knife, with his bare forearms hooked in front of his face. Fiwaknum begged another patch from his tunic and poured some more white powder into his palm. Spasmily he sprinkled it over the boy's arm. No healing glow could be seen for this brief the white dust was more mundane: it was salt. Fiwaknum opened his jaws wide and gulped eagerly forward.

Just as the skull-knife's fangs were about to sink into the morsel I prepared, Morkin opened his eyes. Had the skull-knife been turned to ice, an event not unusual to Doomedark's servants, he could not have stopped in mid-bite more swiftly. For half a moment, Fiwaknum was at a loss and could only stare in amazement and terror. Then, a half-moment more and his gaping jaws had suddenly transformed itself into a broad grin.

"Hello, young sir!" the skull-knife gulped. He gulped again as a knife-point pressed sharply against his throat.

"If you so much-as twitch, little furry one, you'll twitch no more. What's your business with us?" said Morkin.

"Nothing, young sir, nothing, surely. Fiwaknum only seeks warmth and shelter. Gets fine hospitality too. Right at the throat. Quarrelled like a criminal. Fine hospitality surely."

"Oh!" said Morkin, meekly. "Hospitality in your country stretches to becoming a meal for your guests. Fine hospitality that!"

"Oh no, young sir, oh not Fiwaknum a biggottskull-knife. He would not eat such a fine, strong, handsome, eat boy."

"The salt, then, is for good luck. I suppose."

"So clever young lord, surely lies good luck. Counsel

"I ought to make your end now but I fear you have worked some doomsday spell on my Lord. He sleeps strangely and he has lost his mind. Walk him and I'll spirit you yourself and bones."

"Only the light of day can do that, young sir," whispered the skull-knife.

"You're lying, for-thing!" said the boy angrily. He prodded the creature's throat with the knife-point. Morkin snarled.

"It's a dangerous youngster, dangerous, surely."

"More so if you don't," said Morkin, prodding more firmly with the knife.

"I think, perhaps, I should try to wake him young'ar," requested the skulkin.

With his knife-hand, Morkin evened the creature towards Luor. Pewkn took yet another pocket from his tunic and wove it to and fro under Luor's nose. Ungraciously the man opened his eyes. For a moment, Morkin's gaze left the skulkin. The skulkin bit passagely at the boy and, instinctively, the boy lashed out with the skullknob clamped to his hand. The creature crooked through the thin branches that sheltered them. His jaws dropped open at the shock of impact but his flight continued, out into the forest towards a particularly prickly clump of brambles. He scrambled to his feet and raced off northwards, plucking out thorns as he ran.

"Eraser," he snarled grimly. "That's what Pewkn needs: armour on his bum. Robbin' Doondark, indeed! Don't even work for food, if'n!"

Morkin was peltily shaking Luor.

"Luor! my Lord! are you hurt?"

"It's peace, Morkin, I was only daydreaming. What a dream!"

"A funny creature was about to make a meal of my wrist before I stopped it at knife-point. It had put you under a spell, my Lord."

"Don't speak!"

"You, it said it was a skulkin."

"Accursed! Then Doondark gives something. The skulkin rarely come so far south. Did you tell it anything, Morkin?"

"Nay, my Lord, but it was speaking to you when I woke."

Luor sat up and peered at the folds of the cloak where his head had lain. A few specks of glistening dust lingered on the dark fabric.

"Sleep-trot! Morkin, did you kill it?"

Morkin shook his head.

"No, my Lord. It escaped."

"Come, we must ride! You did well enough to wake, though how you did that after sleep-trot! I cannot bathe."

Luor grasped Morkin's hand firmly. Morkin winced and Luor felt the warm slick of blood.

"You're hurt, Morkin."

"I'll pony a briar, my Lord."

"A skulkin bite burns foul as burns," said Dooman.

"Then must I cut it open and suck out the poison?"

Luor laughed. "You listen to too many old-tales, Morkin. No, a few leaves of ivy will clean the wound. We will ride now and gather some on the way, but we must find the skulkin. If we do not, I fear Doondark may get unfriendly warning that the Who are awake."



# CORLETH THE FEY

Upon the forest hung a sparkling frost. The air was cold and thick. If a twig snapped it would crackle for miles around but only the muted whisper of the trees could be heard. Above, the moonlight bonefairy light and clear in a deep dark sky. The moon itself was not very clear, just a deeper darkness blotting out the glistening glaze of the Roads of Light.

Near the forest, strangled faint, lay a glade where the darkness moved strangely, dancing over the pale snow like mist in a gauze. The skulkm passed the clearing edge, though darkness was the daylight, this was beyond his ken. Nameless fears urged him to turn and run but his muscles would not move nor his eyes unfix themselves from the dancing shadows.

As he watched, the form seemed to drift away as though they were just brief clouds that had frostbrowned him and were now passing into the far, far distance. The skulkm charged forwards into the gloom. He felt a beautiful glowing glory shiver through him. He was completely bewildered, never not even as a young shakeling, had he been happy like this. Unaccountably, he felt good and wanted to smile.

The feeling graveted at him like an aching tooth. In a daze, he wandered to the centre of the glade and as the shadows danced around him he peered up at the Moonstar. Its bright, needle-like light penetrated with wonder. He had had never before grasped what beauty resided now in this strange, intoxicating experience. It overwhelmed him. In a gentle, lilting voice, he began to sing a song he had never heard.

The forest filled with the skulkm's floating song. The smaller creatures of the night, hearing only the deadly burn of a skulkm, however well disguised, fled to the burrows and caves. The larger creatures paused, as bewildered as the skulkm itself, and then quickly passed on their way, suspecting some devous skulkm trip.

Yet there was one who heard and understood. Waking herself easily from her walking sleep, Corleth the Fey turned and made her way towards the strange singer. Her long, flowing strides carried her swiftly to the glade. There, at the edge of the clearing, Corleth had archetected the tiny man, things as sang from the bottom of his ill-used heart.

In a soft, deep whisper, Corleth handed his overage to the refrain. Then as if prompted, a breath of wind murmured through the trees and the whole forest seemed to hum with joy.

Gradually the skulkm's song shrivelled to silence. The creature shamed from his dismused looked around himself. The dancing shadows had gone but across the clearing he spottedit a tall, dark figure clad in a cloak that seemed to shimmer with colors. Corleth stepped forward, laughing gently.

"Now, little skulkm, you know what it is to be a child of the earth, not just a spawn of the ice king."

Skulkm smiled foolishly. Not knowing what to say in reply, he scampered up to Corleth and stroked his cloak of midnight blue, gazing wonder in tiny pinpricks of light gilded in the gaps between his fingers.

"Come, little skulkm, tell me on what reached you are bound?"

"None, my Lord." lied the skulkm automatically. Then, having said so, he suddenly regretted it. A longing to be beautiful suddenly the onlyatham he could bear with a roar of pain. Even so, his skulkm ways were not so easily abandoned and the most he could bring himself to say was: "None of my own, Fey Lord."

"I need not take whores," sneered Corleth.

The skulkm shrank his head slowly from side to side.

"I have been bad, my Lord. I sprinkled sleep-frost on the Lord Luxor and found out where he was bound. And the boy who served him... well, I was hungry... even skulkm have to eat, my Lord. He was a sickly boy, angry. He protected my cloak with his knif."

Corleth's eyes lit with sudden anger. The skulkm realized his mistake and bolted away in fearful haste.

"I only gave him a tap on the hand. I didn't eat him. He was a bad boy, a sick boy, a nutty boy... well," whined the skulkm.

"Be at peace, little skulkin," said Corleth. "To each his own way. I know, in truth, you're but a tool in the hand that made you."

The skulkin began to fidget nervously.

"The Cold One will frosty me for sure. He's got thoughts you know, and thoughts. Can I escape him? Make me forget. Fey Lord, surely you can make me forget."

The skulkin looked up at Corleth with wide, pleading eyes. Corleth shook his head.

"I cannot save you from the beauty of the world. I can make you forget the forest, the glade, but you have tasted the sweetness of life and that lousyed my powers to sing. Besides, how could I bring myself to steal such a remembrance from you? Better kill you than cripple you again."

"Very kind of you, surely, but I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble," said the skulkin. Corleth laughed.

"You have a very queasy skulkin. It may save you yet. Here, a small gift for you before I leave."

Into the skulkin's silent, Corleth dropped a small amber crystal. The sphere lay in Rawkite's palm like a tiny sun, glowing with its own soft, red, soothing light. The skulkin gazed on it and smiled. He felt it was very precious. A single tear trickled down his cheek. No one had ever given him a gift before and Rawkite was sure this was precious amongst all gifts that had ever been given.

"Thank you, my Lord!" he gasped and tore his gaze from the jewel to look at Corleth. Corleth was already disappearing into the dark of the forest.

"Wait, my Lord," said the skulkin.

A deep and plaintive voice called in reply. "Farewell, little skulkin, and be gone swiftly! I suspect the watch of the Lord Luxor will not be far behind you."

The skulkin looked nervously around the glade, as if Luxor might burst out of the darkness at any moment. Then he dashed his fist lightly around the glowing heartstone and turned to leave. Through his heart filled with his return to his people, return he must. This time, he had a glimmer of hope to comfort him: the marvelous discovery that there was another being in the world who cared about his fate.

Corleth did not resume his own journey but instead followed the skulkin's faded trail southwards. It was a difficult path to follow if you were not a skulkin and Corleth made slow progress. At length, he emerged onto a forest road. His eyes quickly scanned the width of the pathway for footprints and finding none, he smiled to himself, seated himself on a nearby tree-trunk and waited.

It was not long before the riders he expected appeared. Luxor slowed his horse to a trot and approached Corleth with his sword drawn. Corleth stood and smiled.

"What's your business, tall one?" said Luxor.

"I know a skulkin who shows me more courtesy than that," laughed Corleth.

Morkin reined in beside Luxor and drew his sword swiftly from its scabbard.

"He must be one of Doomedark's my Lord," hissed the boy, in what he imagined was a whisper. "Let me say him."

Corleth laughed again, a long, languorous laugh that rolled through the night air like a gentle mist.

"You may try Morkin, if you wish," said Corleth. He tugged a cool, wet hand and the cloak of midnight blue fell away from him, revealing a shirt of mail so finely woven it seemed like a skin of silver. Corleth rested his hand on the hilt of his sword and waited. Morkin looked appalled, but nevertheless lowered, bared his teeth in an attempt to look grim and fearsome. And ungentle his horse bowed to Corleth.

As Morkin's sword scything down, Corleth stepped lightly aside and caught the boy's wrist in his hand. Both Morkin and his sword tumbled into the snow at once. Morkin snatched his sword as he dropped it, but Corleth was quicker. He took up the sword and held it point against the boy's solar plexus.

"I will not yield," blurted out Morkin, red and angry. "You must kill me first!"

"This is seems I must yield. For I would not kill you," said Corleth. Then he reversed the sword and handed it half-first, to the boy.

Morken jumped to his feet and held the sword uncertainly against Corleth's white leg shirt of mail.

"Will you give quarter, young knight?" asked Corleth with only a hint of a smile breaking on his lips.

"Only if you give your word that you will not try to escape..." answered Morken.

"Lucky, my friend, you have a bold square!" laughed Corleth.

"Friend indeed..." said Luder, straightening up beside Morken. "We fought side-by-side on the Plains of Blood in the last war against Doomedark. I did not recognise him at first. Use this to Corleth the Fey. This prisoner of yours will fetch a hefty ransom, Morken!"

Morken dropped the point of his sword to the ground and turned towards Luder, his face burning.

"How nice to know that? You let me make a fool of myself!"

Luder placed his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"No, Morken, Corleth was testing your spirit: it is better to know your comrade a mite before the real battle begins, is it not?"

"And you make no fool of yourself!" added Corleth. "You did what any true warrior would."

Morken lowered and sheathed his sword. "Truly?" he asked.

"Truly," said Luder. Morken beamed with pleasure. He turned to Corleth.

"You fought quite well too, my Lord," he said, magnificently. Then the man and the boy and the Fey all laughed together.

Morken lent his horse to Corleth and sat afire. Luder so they rode north along the Forest road. Luder did not wish to lose more time than necessary so he didn't mention the matter of the skulls he had seen on their way. When he did relate the tale, Corleth remained silent until Luder had finished. "Then, at last, he spoke:

"I met the skullmen last on your path," said Corleth.

"Why didn't you say?" asked Luder incredulously. "We must find it and silence it."

"At peace, my friend, you must give some quarter even to skulls. Are they not creatures of flesh and blood? He who carries the knowledge and you cannot slay him for that alone. Who knows? Perhaps he will not tell Doomedark of his knowledge."

"Perhaps now I am cold," said Luder bitterly.

"Perhaps it is not," said Corleth. "Would you believe that I found the skulls in a glade of shadows, singeing his heart out to the Moors?" Would you believe that he told me truly of his death this night? Would you believe that when I made him a gift of a heartstone, a tear rolled down his cheek?"

"I am but you had told me, I would not," said Luder.

"Then before the when I say we must let him live and find his own destiny. If we do not, why are we fighting Doomedark?"

"Yes, you are right, my friend," said Luder wearily. Then he added darkly, "The old ways are over."

"Your heart is strong enough. Believe that too," smiled Corleth.

Luder felt silent, remembrance earlier days when they had ridden together across the lands of Midnight, with come that seemed as light as falling snow. He hoped his team was strong enough. Then hearing the gentle snoring of Morken added before him. Luder seemed to hear all the peoples of the Forest murmuring in content while incomprehensible dangers gathered about them and knew he must be strong. He shrugged the sadness from him and rode on towards the Tower of the Moors a little more gladly.



# THE TOWER OF THE MOON

Down approached gently, waving with fingers of light over the lands of Midlight. Far to the east, it touched the green fields of Uluru with a final golden kiss. The tiny pinnacles yonder'd looked around only to see if the next watch approached to silence them. The dawn moved on, trembling over the Downs of Abdon, cloaking them in sparkle and soft blue. The hills which had seemed hundred yards of west-missing creatures in the absence of light, seemed now to draw apart and unfold.

The daylight spread further westwards, painting the Plains of Downfirst orange, then amber, then a deep glowing yellow, as far as they looked. For a fleeting moment, as they did in the noon of the Long Summer, clad in wheats of gold. In lonely heartless scattered across the broad plains, villages stirred and awoke to see the warmth of daylight return, then bent themselves to their daily tasks.

Over the Forest of Thral led the hand of the Sun, shooting bright rays of light into the sepulchral darkness of the trees, and then further west to pass the sheer walls and tall towers of the Citadel of Shirend. As the first blaze of sunlight fell into the Courtyard of the Kings, the great horn sang out over the city. Twelve times the great horn followed its simple fanfare, a short, deep boom followed by a longer, more strident note. A-wake, a-wake, it sang and then faltered. The city rose and awoke dreamily with breakings of shutters, rattling of doors and the growing murmur of life on its cobbled streets.

The dawn did not linger but hurried on its endless journey over northward, over westward till the world ceased to spin. Across the Plains of Blood it shed its own brighter blood. What men roared there shivered in reluctant remembrance, and did not pause to gaze upon the colour of the sunsets. Then in it, the light, crossed the edges of the Roads of Shires, rose up and flew over a sea of mist, wrapped trees to touch the high stonework of the Tower of the Moon.

From hill-crowning dome of Lucking-Crystal, Rorthron was watching. Through the mists of the forest, he gave a wisp of light back over the darkness and sped towards him over the leagues and leagues of trees. And though he would not have dared to count how many darts he had switched from his solitary past, he smiled as he always did when the sun rose in full glory over the green rim of the forest.

Rorthron turned and looked to the west where the light still advanced inexorably upon the darkness of Uluru. He thought: Such a brief summer this summer Sun brought back day he had been not much more than a boy at the height of the Long Summer! Then, the great disk of the Sun seemed to fill the sky. A day seemed to stretch forever as the lengthened hours glided by and people sought cool shade, not cracking tines. It did not seem ten thousand moons ago.

Rorthron shook his head as if to deny that the Long Summer had ever existed. He roused himself from his memories and cast his glint beyond the horizon. He looked first to the north, to Ulugank, the eye of his mind not seeing slumber but instead absorbing a crowd of thoughts that clattered in the far, far distance.

There was much commotion in the great Citadel. Men and Fowler-traitors were preparing themselves for war. The captains of Doomsday's were tallying supplies, marshalling their war-bands, building to and fro in the Winter Palace with lists of units, orders and requisitions. Their thoughts were only of victory, already they were awaiting the howl they would unleash, the vast slaughter that lay in their command.

The lesser traitors of the Wochung were less sanguine. Though they too had no doubt of the final victory, they knew equally that they might not be granted the privilege of enjoying it. knew that their lives were the savings of war to be spent, not only as their cold master desired. Some were filled with despair at the thought that their weakness and object that had brought them to the fighting in the service of the loathsome Doomsday. Others, more pragmatic, simply counted themselves lucky that they, at least, had a chance to survive whilst the inmates of the ColdOne most certainly did not. And the raw young ones, of course, who despite their fears for their own shortened lives took comfort in the knowledge that soon they would be reaping a rich harvest of death and pain across the battlefields of Midlight and鼓舞ed them uncertain courage with kind voices of hope and pledge.

Rorthos turned away. He had seen nothing he had not expected to see, yet still it filled him with infinite sadness to see the people and creatures of Midbright used thus. The Wise had failed so long ago. In the very dawn of the world, he once had been charged with their guardianship. Now their complacent folly had allowed the holopipes and all they could bring themselves to do were to lock themselves securely in their towers and choose to forget that the world still existed beyond the high stems.

At length Rorthos turned the mangled south-east to Corley and the Citadel of Agorath. Here was a different combination: children playing in the streets, winged gorms foaming their horses, market-sellers calling out to weary customers, inn-keepers pouring the first ale of the morning into great jugs, blacksmiths soaking their hammers. The city was at peace, its people content. And if there were vagueness for the future, itching in the depths of men's minds, they were forgotten in the brightness of morning, each day a new hope, a new beginning.

One day from the Gobots Corley still held on to summer about it. Thrandheim lifted a little from Rorthos's thoughts. While Corley was fine, there was still hope and goodness in the world and he must bend all his powers to protect it. Rorthos walked briskly to the stairway and descended from Agorath to meet the ride approaching out of the Forest of Shadows.

Luxor, Corith and Morak were greeted warmly by Rorthos. They had ridden all night after their long journey and they joined Rorthos to break fast in the High Hall. A blazing fire was burning in the great stone fireplace and they sat before it with Rorthos to eat and drink. There were many tales to be told before the day grew older. Luxor turned to more serious matters.

"When does the Council begin, Rorthos? Surely there is much to discuss."

"My friend, it has already begun. I am guilty of a little deceit, as others of the Warwill do themselves. They think I am a foolish old man with a hopeless dream and will have no part in the coming war against Doomedark. They wait for better times, as if better times will appear by magic out of nowhere," said Rorthos wryly.

"That cannot be so!" cried Luxor, agitated.

"It was, my friend, I am the Last Council of the Wise."

Corith laughed. "That is just what we can hope for unanimous decisions. Besides, one of you Rorthos is worth a score of the rest. We should not be troubled when the hop-sheaf desert us."

Rorthos smiled grimly. Luxor nodded his reluctant acceptance of the truth and they took themselves back to the realms of the Free. In the east, the Free still preserved a tattered independence. The Utang of Ulling would suffer none to cross his lands. Free or foul or foul and though the Witchking was known to have sent emissaries to him, only one ambassador had been returned, fayed save. To the north of the Plains of Targ, Kurnar had not been invaded for many moons. On the northern borders, the Forest of Whispers had swallowed many a doomsday raid and to the west the Marshal of Fournier kept a long watch on the Mountains of Ithil.

Most of the Free Marshals remained free, though evil bands had been spotted on the western plains scurrying for the cover of the Forest of Thral. Further west, the Plains of Blood had become a dangerous place for the lonely traveler, though still passable by a strong troop. The Marshal of Shireland was frequent raiding parties north into the plains. Many of the foul had been slain but with each passing day their strength grew and the Gap of Valendar could no longer be reached without an army to clear the way.

Around the Forest of Shadows itself, there was little to be seen of Men. Free or foul, yet further south on the Plains of Dard, Doomedark kept a strong, raiding band that had even returned to the ravaged Citadel of Corley. Of all the lands of Midbright, only Corley remained untouched by Doomedark's hold hand.

None of them doubted that Doomedark would deploy his main strength on the plains of Valendar and once again attempt to force a passage south across the Plains of Blood. To the west the Mountains of Ithil were too formidable a barrier for the numberless armies of the Witchking to be supplied across, let alone to march across. To the west, the bleak passage between the Mountains of Aranmor and Doldrik was too narrow a road for him to take.

But could they hold Doomedark this time on the Plains of Blood as they had done so many times before? If not, Doomedark could choose from many roads after gaining the Plains: he could strike out at his leisure in any direction and the armies of the free would be caught racing to one breach after another. Luxor was not hopeful.

"Doomdark is too strong. How can we hope to hold him now on the Plains of Blood whenever he barely succeeded the last time?"

"Perhaps we should not try 'Lead Corleth.' If we let him move his hordes onto the Plains of Blood and further south if necessary that would leave the way open for us to strike at Lithgarak itself."

"To do that, we would need to pass through the Gap of Vilethor ourselves," said Luxor. "We could not do that with Doomedark camped on the Plains."

"Has you forgotten Lithorn, my friend? Is not the Cradle of Iveron still free?" asked Corleth.

"Tenuously so," said Rorthorn. "The Marshal of Iveron bitterly pressed."

From Lithorn we could strike north without the Marshals of Iveron to block our way then turn west at Doomedark's approach Lithgarak by its back door.

And what of Lithorn and Shemrel and Corleth? Am we to leave them defenceless in the face of Doomedark whilst we ride off on a hopeless sortie? No, Corleth, I will not do that," shouted Luxor.

"Is not any less hopeful than defending the Plains of Blood? Either way all may be lost, but if we should save Lithorn, Doomedark would be finished."

"At what price?" asked Luxor sharply.

Rorthorn got to his feet and stood before them.

"At peace, my friend. All ways are perilous but we must not exclude any these are so definite. Doomedark has gained weapons fear and confusion. We must not think that any task is hopeless – and I know! King Doomedark was once flesh and blood. Now he is more sound hearted. How much easier should it be to defeat him?" said Rorthorn, smiling belligerently.

Luxor was still silent. I know you are not sensible yet, Rorthorn. If your words are meant to comfort us, they are ill-chosen.

"Perhaps you need more than words," said Rorthorn calmly. He reached out his hand towards Luxor and opened out his palm upwards. "Perhaps you need the..."

"There, in the palm of the Wise, lies a ring of red gold into which was set a single jewel as round and smooth as a pearl but of a clear sparkling blue that flashed and flickered like lightning.

I have rings already, Rorthorn.

"None like this, my friend," laughed Corleth. Luxor looked curiously at Corleth, wondering what joke they could possibly be.

I never thought I could fit it. If I wear no Man or Fey has need of our services. I wear this is the Moon Ring, the last of the Great War Rings of Midnigh...

Luxor turned his gaze again to Rorthorn's palm and looked in wonder at the legendary ring that lay there. The mists of despair that had clung to his thoughts for many moons seemed to clear and held away as he watched. Beside him, Lithorn was craning his neck so far forward to get a better view that he almost fell off his seat. Luxor looked up at Rorthorn.

You know I cannot take this, Rorthorn. It is not my right.

"Forgive me, Luxor," said Rorthorn, "I have kept this from you too long, but with good reason. You say not simply took Luxor of the Free, you are the last heir of the House of the Moon. You, my Lord Luxor, are the Moon-keeper and this ring is yours by right, to be worn only in circumstances of greatest peril. Once strapped on your finger, it cannot be removed until you are dead or the peril has passed. It will give you the Power of Command and the Power of Vision over the worlds and subjects loyal to you, even at great distances. With the Power of Vision you will be able to see through their eyes what they see. With the Power of Command you will be able to urge them to undertake any task they would willingly perform for you. And more than that, it will also the overwhelming strength of your mind and send forth a tide of hope to all the beleaguered lands of Midnigh. It is yours. Take it, and use it with care."

Rorthorn the Wise stepped forward and dropped the Moon Ring onto Luxor's hand. Luxor was quite speechless for a while. Then at length he spoke.

"Thank you, Rorthorn the Wise, this is a gift beyond words. Yet, I do not understand why you have kept all this from me so long. Surely in the last war against Doomedark, this ring would have been a help beyond price?"

"Yes, Luxor, it surely would but the Wise have their' reasons. The Solbrs is the peak of Doomedark's power. Defeat him before that and he will return as surely as the unyielding foil. Defeat him at the pinnacle of his power and he will never return, never blight the lands of Midnigh again with his foul schemes. Nor would I be worthy of your true ancestry for fear that Doomedark would gain

the knowledge too and hunt you down like vermin. Does now he respects nothing and when the morrow comes, the Doomsday itself, he will expect all its glory for himself. From Usgard he will issue forth an ice-fear the like of which has never been seen, rolling its flame across black and blue a plague. Tomorrow, at dawn, you must then the Moon Ring and send a blade of hope winging across the land, melting hence fire, stabbing him with a hook that a wretched still exists that can stain him and filling him with dole. Then you must ride swiftly to Corinay and rally all the peoples of the Free to your banner. You must challenge Doomsday everywhere. Leave no pathway unguarded nor choke open and a flood will pour through. The Moon Ring that will lend you the power to gather the forces of the Free and under your guidance they will march against Doomsday. Is one? The Captain of Colchis be bland compared to those whose way is lit by the War Ring of the House of the Moon.

"And a plan?" asked Luxor. "Are we not to have a battle plan?"

Corleth grasped Luxor's arm firmly.

"Of course, Luxor," he said. "But don't you see? This time, this war the Moon Ring lends us the power to change our plans at a moment's notice. No longer must we stake all upon a single throw."

"Yes, of course," said Luxor, still gazing at his new found inheritance.

"There is one matter we have not yet considered," said Rorthron, a note of warning thrumming in his voice.

"What is that, Miss One?" prompted Corleth.

"The Ice Crown."

Even Corleth shamed to pale at its mention. Moreon tugged gently at Luxor's sleeve and whispered a question to him. Rorthron nodded and turned to the boy.

Heavened of the purest, coldest crystals of ice. Forged in the Frozen Waters on the bleakest of nights by Doomsday himself, the Ice Crown is the source of all his power for it enables him to suck from the heart of the world all the bitter forces of cold and bind them to his will. He keeps it in the Tower of Doom, north of Usgard, across the Plains of Despair. Few have seen it and less yet all have felt its bitter touch.

"Do you think we could seize it?" asked Luxor. New hope had dawned in him now and he could almost begin to believe that even such a desperate folly as this might succeed.

"I think we must try," said Rorthron. "If we succeed and destroy it, Doomsday's power will be shattered. Even if we fail, the attempt will distract him and thus help our armies to prevail."

"We cannot spare more than a few for such a perilous task," said Luxor.

"No, indeed. And no more than one for the first journey to the Tower of Doom, one who can withstand fire. Fearful storms from the sun and bright streams from the sun. It is your choice, High-prince."

"I cannot lay such a task on another's shoulders. I must go myself."

"Indeed you said, said Rorthron. "But that cannot be, the Moon Ring throws forth manwarmth—that is its boon and its bane. Doomsday would sense your presence before you get within fifty leagues of the Ice Crown. You must choose another. I would go myself but the Wiss have too much knowledge of each other. I could not hide myself from Doomsday any more than he can hide himself from me."

"Then there is only Corleth," said Luxor reluctantly. "No other than he can read the ice-fear at its coldest, neither that I know of."

Luxor turned to Corleth. The boy looked troubled. He turned his eyes away from Luxor then rose silently and wandered toward the colonnade that circled the High Hall. He stopped by a slender column and gazed out through the Looking Crystal over the Forest of Shadows. The others remained silent, waiting for him to decide. After a long while, Corleth returned and stood before them, all in front of the great fire. His eyes were heavy and his face drawn.

"There is another," he said. "One stronger than I could ever be in the face of the ice-fear."

"Then who?" asked Luxor, puzzled and frustrated by the notices of the Fey.

"If I could keep this from you, my friend Luxor, I would, but in truth I cannot. The wiscons say that one will be born, half Fey half human, whom the ice-fear cannot touch, armoured with the laughter and gaiety of the Fey and the wild fire of Men, the ice-fear will roll from him like drops of nameless summer showers."

Corleth pressed and his eyes glazed over as he tried to imagine what such a summer, what such

a shower would be like. Then her blinks and forced herself to continue:

"My Lord, my friend, Loxor. Much grace — he absease you!"

The Feydor had his head propped at the floor; he could not bring himself to look Loxor in the eye. The silence was profound.

"Me?" whispered Norken. "How can it be me?"

Cordath heard his head and turned his deep eyes towards the boy.

"Tell me what you know of your father and mother, Norken," said the Fey gently. The boy looked startled.

"I know nothing, my Lord. I was only sixteen when my Lord Loxor found me, while hunting, lost in the Forest of Thimarr. He gathered me up and took me home and cared for me, as he has cared for me ever since he has been like a Father to me all my life."

Cordath smiled and looked up towards the distant, silvery light of the High Hall.

"A wounding moon ago," he said. "We had pressed down the foul hardness of Ossendruin on the Plains of Blood, but the pain was heavy. Many were slain, more were shattered, burned by the last blade of ice, fear, incantation, ageration. After the combat, a host of our faithful warriors wandered lost and dismasted across the bloody fields, their hearts empty, their march full of horror. There were so many that those who recovered and survived could not hope to find them all before they took their own path toysore or simply waited away in the cold, bitter nights."

"Such am I, wounded to the quick in body and mind. I found my way into the depths of the Forest of Tharr. It was there, exhausted and close to death, that one of the Fey, the Fey Aasha, found me. She dragged me on a tangle of branches to her tree-home and there she nursed me to health again. As my strength grew, so did his enchantment with Aasha and so did her enchantment with him."

When he was fully strong again, his mended by her comfort and words of peace. His body mended by her subtle Feyish skills, they made their love complete. Yet Aasha was troubled. She knew their love, however strong, could not last, for he was a mortal titan and she a Fey. She said nothing to him but let the days and nights of their love linger on until she could bear it no longer. Then, gathering all her courage, she freed his mind of every memory of her, not wishing him to bear the pain of their impossible love. She led him to the southern edge of the Forest of Tharr and watched him dissolve into the distance as he walked out across the Plains of Iverith towards the Mountains of Morning and disappeared home.

"So she then called Aasha bore a child, a rare child, mortal as well as her. Her delight almost overwhelmed the pain of parting but even in the moments of joy she thought only of his. Out of love had she made him forget yet she knew she would not forget her own memories, however painful. She was determined that he too should keep nothing of the harvest of their love. And so, tenay a moon later, she journeyed south with her babe across Iverith and Hornith to the borders of Connay."

"How many times had he told her of Hornith he roamed in the Forest of Thimarr, how many times had he pictured in her mind its winding paths and gentle glades. She knew where he would sit. As



days approached, she listened for the hoofbeats of his horse and when she was sure, she bounded. The soft, warm fur encircled him by the pitch. She dared not anger her that she would cry out as he approached and run to his arms. So, with a parting kiss for her child she turned back to the North, determined to see him never again.

"That will never you, Morkin. Your father is my friend, Luso."

Rorthron the Wise sniffed coolly and dabbed at his eyes with the long sleeves of his gown. Luso, for the second time this morning, was dumbfounded. But Morkin, shimmering with joy, leapt to his feet and flung his arms around the Moonpriest.

"You always have been and now it is true," he said. In some confusion Luso stepped and returned this son's embrace.

"It is all I could wish, Morkin," he said, then added, "Save that all secrets were as happy as this which I revealed — and revealed sooner."

Suddenly Morkin whirled round on Corineth.

"You! Why did you keep the secret from — from my father? You are his friend."

"And you too, Maren. The Fey have long suspected that the House of the Moon still survived. The Wise are not the only guardians of knowledge. I could not be sure until today when Rorthron held for me the Moon Ring, but once I have known it, I have harboured a secret hope that your father was the Moonpriest. I did know, as Rorthron said, that Doomdark suspected nothing. To have revealed your kinship would have placed you both in double jeopardy as it does even now. My words may yet be your death, Morkin. I pray you will forgive me. These are dark times."

Morkin looked subdued.

"I suppose you did right, my Lord Corineth. It is I who should be sorry, not you," he said grudgingly. "I hate Doomdark. He oppresses everything."

"He does indeed, Morkin, my well named son," said Luso. "Corineth the Fey, you have given me a hard choice. How can I send a boy I've loved from my own son to such a perilous quest? He may be able to scorn the ice-fear — that I can well believe — but there are many other dangers on the road to the Tower of Doom."

It was Morkin who answered first.

"You must send me, Father. If you do not, Midnight might be lost anyway and then what would become of me?"

"The boy is right," said Rorthron. "We must take every chance. It has come to that."

Luso nodded slowly. He clasped Morkin's hand.

"If you wish it, Morkin, seek the Ice Crown and attempt its destruction. I will not send you, but you may go if you wish."

There was fire in the boy's voice and a gladness shining in his eyes.

"Of course I will go, Father! I can't wait to see Doomdark who will need it!"



# THE SOLSTICE

It was a strange dawn. The Sun seemed reluctant to shake off the darkness of night and soar over the rim of the world. When it did, the rays it sent streaming across Midnights desolate land and pallid from the north a frozen mist was sweeping over the hills and forests and plains and the dawn was silent, the air empty of birds. The earth untroubled by the chattering creatures of day. Even to Corley the colours spread across the pale chill gripped him's heart as they rose together, the new day. Old warhorses, instead, whispered of Doomsday, for they had been touched like the barren, but the rest simply stretched and tried, with small success, to shrug off their unbreathing fear.

This was only the vanguard of the ice-fear that gathered in the north. Around Ushgarak the mist was so thick, and high that the city still lay in darkness, though the rest of Midnights was bathed in light. Then, like a storm driven by the winds of the tall sky, the great mist began to roll south over the Plain of Despair. Even Doomedland's creatures quailed and shivered as it passed. The mist fanned out, and moved even southwards but, it did not seem to thin or diminish, rather, it grew thicker and taller as it devoured the walking landscape.

From the Tower of the Moon, Luor of the Moonprince rode out to meet the dawn. At one side of him rode Morkin, his face sicker and shivering with the cold the dawn seemed to lack. At the other side rode Corlett the Fey, a host of unbeknown faughoen playing round his lips. Luor turned first to Corlett.

"My friend, we must part now but I will be with you. Know your people are loath to fight but this is more than a war of Men. Ride north to the forests of the Fey and gather these you can to our banner - we will have need of you and all your kin before this war is done."

"The Fey will fight, my Lord Moonprince. Though at times you may not notice how I will raise more than a war band, I promise you. Fare thee well, my friend."

Then the Moonprince turned to Morkin. He placed his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"This journey has come too soon. I fear your task may be the hardest of all. Morkin, take no risk without need. You risk enough already."

"Have no fear, Father. I will return. You risk more than I and it is you who should take care, do not orphaine again."

Luor smiled.

"I will try not to Farewell my son."

The Moonprince turned to the south, east, towards Corley. He took the Moon Ring and slipped it on his finger. In his mind the distant murmur of battle seemed to grow and warm the human in his blood. Suddenly the horizon seemed to expand and fly away into the distance as into his mind flooded all the hopes and fears of the peoples of the Firs. He drew his sword, Hammar, unsheathed and held it aloft, then spurred his white stallion towards the Forest of Shadows and distant Corley.

"Arise, Midnights!" he called in his voice. "Arise the Free! Peril and doom lie at our gates. Waken your colour, arm yourselves with courage! We ride to conquer Doomedland forever! Arise, Midnights, arise!"

His war cry ring out across the still dawn, flying over the forests and hills, whispering over the plains, in the distant reaches of the free, inithrom, in Manaklı, in Gherard, in Human lands, Corlett and in Xerokoth. Then paused and looked about themselves, imagining they heard a faint echo whose words they could not quite catch yet which quickened their hearts and raised their blood race.

Then as if swept away by a sudden wind, though the air stayed still as the mountains, the doomsday fire lay over Midnights vanished northwards, shrinking back toward Ushgarak. The full dawn broke suddenly over the land, showering it in a blaze of warmth and light. A wave of hope rippled outwards from the Forest of Shadows across the country of the Firs, to far Corley to the Plains of Dawn, to the Mountains of Morning, warming chill hearts and bringing a glimmer of gladness to Midnights that had too long been absent.

In the Winter Palace of Uthgenek, the frozen maid that should have been flowing out in an endless stream was rushing back in. Goondam flailed his arms through it until it cleared about him.

"Back!" he cried. "Back! Fly out, out!"

It was to no avail. The ice-fear rushed homewards and sank back into his cold flesh. When all had returned and the air cleared, there was worse a warmth, an inexplicable warmth seemed to touch his maid. The Witch King grimaced. He had almost forgotten what pain was like. A spark of doubt burned itself in his thoughts and like a cancer began to grow.

"A Moospriar?" he mused. "Not it, can't be!"

But far to the south, already Luer the Moospriar sped through the Forest of Shadows to rally Comley and the Free. The War of the Soltice had begun.



# GUIDE TO PLAY

## Loading instructions

To LOAD the Lords of Midnight, press the SHIFT key and RUN/STOP key. The game will then LOAD and RUN.

## Starting off

The Lords of Midnight has a facility which enables you to SAVE the game you are playing at any stage. When loading a complete version will appear depicting the situation of Luso the Moophinou at your quest, will begin on the day of the Solstice itself.

If you press **1**, a screen will appear instructing you to LOAD the saved data of the game you wish to continue. Once the data has been loaded back into your Commodore, the last screen of the game you saved will appear and you can continue your quest.

## Saving a game in progress

The data for the Lords of Midnight can be saved at any stage of the game. To save a game in progress, you must first press the **3** key. This should only be pressed at a time when the computer is waiting for you to press an option key. If it's doing something else, it will merely ignore your key-stroke.

What you press **3** a screen will appear instructing you what to do next.

## Abandoning a game

We hope that you will never need to abandon a game of Midnightr but if it should come to pass that your frustrations beyond all hope, you can abandon the game by pressing the RUN/STOP and RESTORE keys.

## Keeping track of things

Because such a lot is always going on in the land of Midnightr, we have provided a facility whereby you can keep a printed record of each game as it progresses. Of course, you will need a printer compatible with the Spectrum and you may need a lot of paper! Pressing the COPY key at any stage of the game will print out the screen in front of you. If you use this facility to its full, you should end up with an illustrated history of the War of the Solstice.

## The role you play

You the player take the role of Luso the Moophinou, Lord of the Fists. By virtue of the Moon Ring, which lends you the Power of Vision and the Power of Command, you can control other characters that are loyal to you, move them through the landscape of Midnightr and look through their eyes. Some of these characters are simply individuals, others are commanders of the heads of whole armies, when you move a commander, his army moves with him.



The computer plays the part of Doomedark, the Witch King of Mithgarth and controls the characters and armies loyal to him. In addition, the computer also governs the actions of the independent characters and forces in the land of Mithgarth.

## A choice of games

There are two distinct ways of winning a victory over Doomedark. The first is by war: by sending armies north to the Palace of Dispern and sending the Citadel of Ushgarrik from whence Doomedark commands his foot-hordes. In such a strategy, Luxor himself will play a major part as a commander in the field.

The second way of winning is by quest: by guiding Morkin, Luxor's son, to the Town of Dozen to destroy the Ice Crown, the source of Doomedark's power. Morkin can have no power to help him on his journey for the Ice Crown sends forth the ice-fear which withers men's hearts. By virtue of his birth, half human, half-fay only Morkin can resist the utter coldness of the Ice Crown's power.

If you prefer a pure adventure, just concentrate on the quest of Morkin. The armies of Doomedark will still march south to conquer Mithgarth but the armies of the Free will defend themselves without your guidance, even though they will not make any counter moves.

If you prefer a pure war game, ignore the quest of Morkin and concentrate on the assault of Ushgarrik.

To play the complete epic, however, you should place equal importance on the war that Luxor directs and the quest that Morkin journeys on. Naturally enough, the complete epic takes the longest. Play off the other options, you will find the quest, the quicker game.

There are no keys required to choose which sort of game you play — you simply choose move-by-move which characters you want to guide. At any stage you can alter the balance of will, abandon the quest, and take up war, or return defeat on the battlefield and turn to seek the Ice-Crown.

If you want to play the Lord of Mithgarth with your family or friends, we suggest that each player signs control over a particular character or group of characters, and that you play as a team against the evil Doomedark.

## Victory for Doomedark.

To win, Doomedark (or the computer if you prefer) must achieve two objectives. First, he must eliminate Morkin, as long as Morkin is alive the game will continue. Second, he must subdue the armies of the Free. This can be done in two ways, either by eliminating Luxor the Mispioneer who is their commander or by taking the Citadel of Zogorath in the land of Corley, the home of all their hopes.

If Luxor is killed you the player has full control over the other characters in the game except for Morkin, his son. If, by any chance, Morkin manages to find the Moon Ring that Luxor wore and which was the source of Luxor's Powers of Vision and Command, he can put it on and you will regain control over those characters still loyal to the Free. However, once he does this, Morkin will immediately become known to Doomedark and his quest, to slay the Ice Crown will become almost impossible.

If Zogorath is taken by Doomedark but Morkin is still alive, Luxor can continue the war, struggling against the Witch King. For Doomedark to win, Zogorath must be Doomedark's and Morkin must be dead, OR both Luxor and Morkin must be dead.

## The Ice-Fear and the Moon Ring

The ice-fear is Doomedark's greatest weapon, sapping men's courage and reducing armies to rubble. If strong enough it may even cause characters once loyal to Luxor and the Free to desert to Doomedark's control. He can use it either as a general effect, spread equally over the lands of Mithgarth, or concentrate it in particular places.

The only shield against the Moon Ring that Luxor wears, that includes the strength and warmth of his mind. The closer a character or army is to Luxor the less will be the demoralising effect of the ice-fear. This same applies if Morkin is the wearer of the Moon Ring. There is one drawback, the Mispioneer can see the warmth of the Moon Ring and so at any stage of the game, he knows the precise whereabouts of its wearer.

The strength of the ice-fear also depends on Doomedark's confidence. As the Witch King takes pride after each of the Free's losses the ice-fear grows just where he suffers defeat or doubt, the ice-fear divides. The Ice Crown has a cold intelligence of its own and as Morkin comes closer

towards it, it will feel the approaching danger and bend a greater and greater part of its force towards its own protection. So as Morrik approaches the Ice Crown, more and more of the ice-force will be directed at him alone but it will not affect him. Instead, the burden of its force will begin to lift from the allies and commanders of the Free.

## Controlling a character

As stated in the introduction, the Lands of Mordor is not a standard adventuring game and controlling the characters does not require you to guess at the right phrase of command. Instead, you have four basic options, each available at the press of a single key:

### 1) Look ← (Backspace arrow)

On screen will appear a landscape corresponding to the view that the character sees in the direction he is looking at the time. There are no scrolling, varying lines of text giving details of where he stands as well as a heraldic shield which identifies him. During the LOOK option you can turn the character to look in another direction by pressing one of the compass keys.

These correspond to the eight points of the compass and are numbered 1-8 on the keyboard: (1) North, (2) North-east, (3) East, (4) South-east, (5) South, (6) South-west, (7) West, (8) North-west.

### 2) Move (Spacebar)

The character will move forward in the same direction he was last looking. When he reaches his next location, he will continue looking in that direction and the LOOK option will reappear with a new landscape.

### 3) Think (Return key)

When the character is told to THINK, the screen becomes black and white and you are given more details regarding the character, any army he controls and the place he is in. This could be included in the short end of the LOOK option.

### 4) Choose (Restore key)

The CHOOSE screen presents you with a list of special options not covered by the basic LOOK and MOVE options. It also tells the why you must press for each of these options.

What special options are open will depend upon the situation the character finds himself in but will include such choices as searching, halting, attacking an enemy, impairing, defining and so on.

The CHOOSE screen will also reflect the personality of the particular character. All the choices you are presented with are only those the character would be likely to choose by himself. So, the choices open to a cowardly character will seldom include brave deeds, the choices open to a grumpy character will seldom include acts of generosity.

You can press the LOOK, MOVE, THINK and CHOOSE keys at any stage during any of the four basic options and the new screen will appear at once.

## Selecting a character

At the beginning of the game, you have four characters under your control. These can all be selected by using the four Function keys. Lurtz the Mouthpiece is F1, Mordor Hexen in F2, Goroth the Pig in F3 and Rorith the Witch in F4.

With any of these selected, the display will switch immediately to the LOOK option for that character.

To select other characters (which you must recruit to your cause during the course of the game) you must press the INST/DEL key. When you do this a list of other characters you control will appear together with a set of the keys to select them. Press one of these selection keys and the display will switch immediately to the LOOK option for that character.

Once you have selected a character, your control will remain with that character until you select another. Selection can be undertaken at any stage of the LOOK, MOVE, THINK and CHOOSE options.

## How the game works

The game begins on the day of the Winter Solstice. Initially you control Lusor the Moorprince, Markos, Corin the Fey and Northern the Muse. These characters start the game at the Tower of the Moon in the Forest of Shadows. The game proceeds by day and by night.

During the day you can move any or all of the characters you control and any armies that are with them. The distance a character can move in one day depends on the difficulty of the terrain and whether he is walking or riding as well as his state of health. You will learn by experience precisely how far you can travel under given circumstances. However, there is one important thing to remember: when you travel directly north, south, east or west, you are moving just one league at a time. When you move north-east, north-west, south-east or south-west you are moving along the diagonals at a square cross-table by one league, a distance of approximately 1.4 leagues. Therefore, the will take you longer and have less hours of daylight for the rest of your journey.

When a character has exhausted his hours of daylight, night will fall for him, and unless there are exceptional circumstances (the THINER screen will tell you if there are), he will not be able to move more until the following day. You can still, however, move other characters under your control.

Once you have moved all the characters you wish to you must press the NIGHT B (zero) key. The night fall everywhere and signals the start of hostilities for the forces of Doomsday. During the night, Doomsday will move his characters and armies across Midnights and there will be a pause as he thinks. Soon, however, a new day will dawn and you can command your characters afresh.

**DO NOT PINGEET TU PRESS THE NIGHT B (zero) WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR DAY'S MOVEMENT IF YOU DO NOT PRESS IT NOTHING FURTHER WILL HAPPEN AT ALL.**

## The Sun

A character will see the sun when looking in the appropriate direction at the right time of day (east in the morning, west in the evening). This can be a useful aid to play in seeing how many hours remain to that character in a particular day.

## Engaging in battle

Minor skirmishes involving individual characters and small warbands are quick affairs and can take place at any stage throughout the day. Battles between armies, however, that will not be decided until the day ends.

Because a battle between armies is such a major event, you will not be able to move an army to the same location as an enemy army by using the simple MOVE option. Such a move always one of the options so instead you can opt for using the CHOOSE option. Some of the commanders you control may be so afraid that the choice to move them into battle does not even appear as one of the possibilities.

During the course of the day you can move as many armies into battle as you wish. If you move more than one army into the same battle, the program will keep track of their times of arrival (which may influence the outcome of the conflict). However, once an army or a character has been moved into a battle it will not be able to move again until the following day.

As dawn on the following day the outcome will be known to your commanders. If the enemy has lost, his armies will have been destroyed in the night or have fled. Is using your armed and characters free to move, if the enemy has not lost, you have the choice of retreating with whatever left of your armies or continuing the struggle for another day possibly throwing in more forces. If, however, the enemy has won a decisive victory when dawn breaks you will find your armies destroyed and your surviving commanders scattered, the enemy forces may have advanced far beyond the battlefield.

Many things will influence the outcome of a battle: the number of troops, the type of terrain, the quality of the commanders and, of course, the strength of the ice-fear (but, as any warrior must, you must learn by experience).

## The map of Midnights

The map of Midnights (see back) reproduced in the booklet depicts the major features of the geography of Midnights, but like any map it does not show every single detail. You will find compasses wherever you roam. It will serve well, however, as a guide to your journeys through Midnights, and a good helper when you become lost. But do not forget that the landscape has its own secret!

## The free and the foul

On the day of the Solution, at the start of the game, Doomedark's forces hold the north whilst the Freehold the south. Few of Doomedark's armed will be found south of the Mountains of Ithril and the Plains of Nalethon. Of the major citadels, Doomedark holds Ulfgarrik, Grang' Mongath and Kyr. The only armies of the Free to be found north of the Mountains of Ithril and the Plains of Nalethon are in Ithorn and the Plains of Ithril. Of the major citadels, the Freehold hold Ithorn, Kurnar, Morath, Sharand' Gurd and Asperath. In the east, the barbarian tribes of the Tang remain independent of both Doomedark and the Moonpriests. In the west, save for the Citadel of Gurd, the lands are mostly empty and under no-one's sway.

The Fey are in loose alliance with the Free. They do not seek war but neither do they relish the thought of Doomedark overrunning Midgar. Their part in the War of the Solution will be mostly passive. Their human allies the Forest of Midgar and Doomedark's forces will not willingly be allowed passage through these. Controll the Fey Howlets, should be able to rally enough of his people to his banner to form an army.

The Wise have isolated themselves from the world and live like hermits in their tall towers. Doomedark will not bother them so long as they remain outside two from the affairs of Men and most certainly they will not aid him. In the right circumstances, it may be possible to seek their help and be granted it. Rontaran the Wise could prove a useful ally in this.

The Usang of Utang may be persuaded to bring the Tang into the war against Doomedark, especially if the armies of the Witchking are lamped or forced to trample on his lands. If the war-fear proves too strong, however, he may switch loyalties to Doomedark.

Of the Free themselves, there are many Lords. Luer should first set himself the task of seeking their loyalty thus gaining control of many armies. Most powerful are the Lord Marshals of the great Citadels but the Moonpriests will find other Lords who will obey known his command. He should not, however, waste too much time seeking out allies, there are others who will make fine ambassadors.





## Looking around

During your travels through Midnights, you will see many different scenes. This section provides a guide to some of the things you will see. All of these features of Midnights geography may offer cover to an army.

### MOUNTAIN



Moving across a mountain will take many hours of travel and leave you exhausted at the end of your journey.



### CASTRAL



A strongly fortified city which may harbour enemy forces or offer shelter to a friendly army. Storming a castral will be a hard task.



### FOREST



Movement through a forest will not be swift. The number of boundaries, however, will find it doubly difficult for forces as the homes of the magical Fey who hold no love for the foul creatures of the Wildlings.



### TOWER



The refuges of the West: the Towers of Midnights are almost impregnable from attack but help may be sought in one of these. It may not always be granted.



## HENCE



Built in the dawn of the world, these ancient temples have strange powers not always benign.



## VILLAGE



A village can offer warmth and shelter to the lonely traveller if its people prove friendly.



## DOWNS



Gently rolling hills, the downs slow a traveller only slightly but they may hide unseen dangers.



## KEEP



The fortress of a major Lord, a keep will offer protection against peasant rebels but will not withstand a determined assault for long.



## SNOWHALL



Built by the wretched peoples of Midnights during the long winter, snowhalls are quite large structures which can offer shelter to many hundreds if need be.



## LAKE



The remaining lakes of Midnights are hardly warm springs. They have powers to revive and heal those who oppose Doomsday and the forces of cold.



## FROZEN WASTE



Surrounding the lands of Midnights are the Frozen Wastes. They cannot be entered by any Free Folk or Fey.



## RUIN



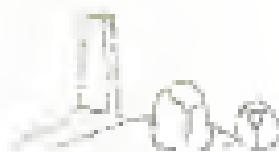
Abandoned fortresses of former war-thrums may harbour dark and dangerous things but may at times of need, offer some protection against attack.



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## LITH

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These ancient standing stones often have magical powers.

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## CAVERN

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A cavern can provide shelter and a hiding place but it may already have some secret foul creatures.

As well as these features, you will also see the flat expanses of the Plains of Midnight. It is only on the plains that you will actually see the banners and ranks of the armies that march across the land.

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## ARMY

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A friendly army offers no hindrance to the traveller, but an attempt to go through the midst of an enemy army offers the gravest of peril, by day or by night. Armies in residence, friends or foes of the GM, play to be found well hide themselves well and not be seen.

As you look around during your travels, large figures may appear in the foreground of each panorama you see. These are the warriors, characters or creatures that lie immediately ahead of you on the borders of the next screen. You do not always, however, see all that lies ahead. The wise travellers must be both bold and wary.

## Controls at a glance

←	Look	Test/Def	Select
↑	North	Restore	Choose
↖	Northwest	Return	Think
↗	East	Spectre	Move
↙	Southeast	S	Save
↘	South	L	Load
↙	Southwest	T	Yes
↖	West	R	No
↗	Northwest	Y	
↙	Right	N	
Run/Stop plus Restore	Restart	E	Load
		R	Logout
		Y	Contest
		N	Rethrone

The Paytron is in sole charge of the colony. It assesses the personnel's oxygen needs, it allocates food and work duties. It's defines a difficult area with the alert for intruders. It's pursuit droids track down enemy saboteurs which infiltrate the base.

Every aspect of the colony is constantly monitored, every need of its operatives ordered and carried out. Every sector is usually scanned and its sites manually plotted and monitored.

When the attack comes, Paytron will cope with defensive elements and details which would leave a human brain unengaged, computer circuits saturated. It reacts to all every aspect of the base's countermeasures. A failure in one department must be reported and its effect on the fabric of the base assessed immediately.

Human lives will be expended as necessary but if Paytron ever goes down...

The "B" side of the tape contains a taste of Paytron. It is as unique in its own way as *The Lord of the Rings*.

Paytron contains arcade standard graphics and action with a game of strategy and tactics which will keep you gripped for months.

It challenges you to take the role of the Paytron, looking after the needs of the Bonta/S Installation while repelling an awesome alien attack.

Send pursuit droids racing through tunnels after enemy saboteurs.

Defend the supply ship and beam down much-needed provisions and personnel.

Move into Freespace to calculate the base's current status.

Keep repair crews where they are most needed. Paytron is a game of six levels and there's a just a taste of the graphics and action in store to be found on the "B" side of the tape.

Type LOAD" and press ENTER to see some screens of Paytron action up and running. When you appreciate that this game offers six levels of action, introducing new elements all the time, we hope you'll be convinced that you should rush out and buy it for your Commodore 64 at just £19.95.



## Take a step into the Beyond

Go Beyond the games alone offered by the rest of the games market. Enter a world peopled by truly unique loss-games ideas - some available now, others ready soon, some still at the planning stage.

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Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Best achievement so far: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Pyraman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	67.95	
Adamic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	69.95	11.95
Archie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	69.95	11.95
Mr Robot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	69.95	11.95
MyClass II	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	611.95	13.95
All prices include P&P				

Grand Total = £

Total number of games =

## Spy vs Spy

A cartoon adventure featuring the black and white spies from MAD Magazine. Set and define traps, search hideouts, embryo layouts for the secret briefcase and try to make your getaway to the spy plane. Marvelous action for one or two players.

## Pal Mentor

The most realistic animation yet seen on the 64! Guide the warrior down into the Pa creature's lair, trying to net the predators and gather their energy until he becomes powerful enough to Levitate, move his body to Remote View, Thinspect, or become Invisible. And at the bottom search the Source.

## My Chess II

The best Commodore 64 chess program. Features nine levels, 30 views of the board, Move solving, 128 great games of the past on the disc.

## Akuh

Launch your Mindprobe into the unfathomable "Metaneel" world of Akuh. Where logic works but doesn't rule and where every person is a challenge to be probed, pushed and finally persuaded to reveal a treasure: a tool or a new mystery.

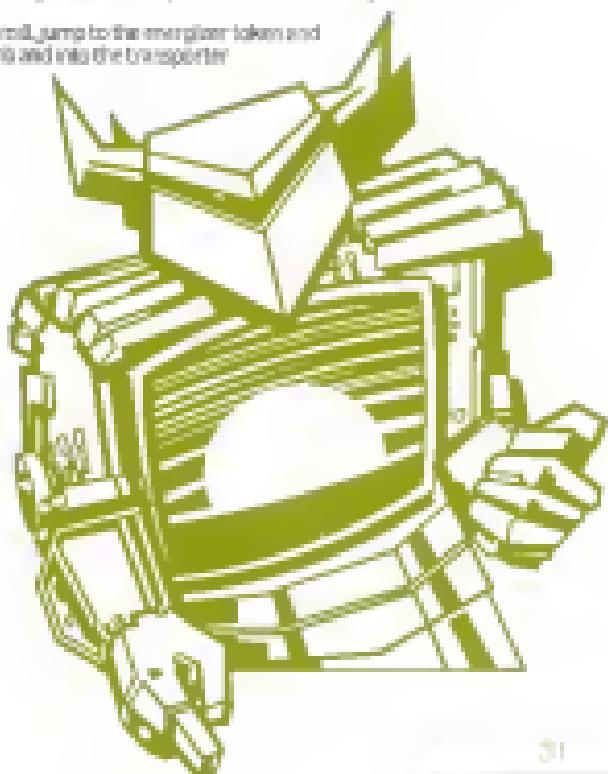
## Antec

Unearth the Golden Idol from a long lost South American Aztec Temple. Macabre monsters and cunning traps will your explorer as he walks, climbs, jumps and fights his way through the brilliantly-animated action. Noted best Action/Adventure game in the U.S.

## Mr Robot

Guide Mr Robot through 22 fiendish courses with incredible fixtures and snacking areas. Then create your own screen game design with the simple to use Robot Factory and tell it on to your friends.

Use the cockpit, over the treadmills, jump to the energizer token and destroy the alienfire, ignite the bomb and into the transporter.



# BEYOND

CHALLENGING SOFTWARE

## THE LAND OF MIDNIGHT

